

Select Committee on Children's Services – 21st January 2009

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Update on Progress of Dudley Children and Young People's Trust

Purpose of Report

1. To report to the Select Committee on Children's Services about the work of the Children and Young People's Trust in Dudley

Background

2. At the meeting of the Select Committee on Children's Services of 13th November 2008 a report was provided about the Children and Young People's Trust in Dudley. A request was made for regular updates on the work of the Trust and the Trust Board, and this report is the first of those updates.
3. At the meeting of the Children's Trust Board of 15th December 2008 the draft constitution was approved subject to certain revisions being incorporated. A copy of the approved constitution is attached, containing the required revisions.
4. Attendance at Board meetings by representatives of the agencies in membership is generally good. There is very active involvement by representatives of the Local Authority, the Primary Care Trust, the Connexions Service, the Dudley Council for Voluntary Services, schools, and the college sector. All of the agencies in membership do take part in Board activity and are engaged with other sub groups of the Trust as well.
5. The Board of the Children's Trust now comprises of nearly 30 members. Additional requests for membership have recently been received and will be considered, but currently Board members do not feel that it is necessary to increase the membership further.
6. Some examples of recent and current work being undertaken on behalf of the Board of the Trust are as follows:

- a) Partner agencies have contributed to a budget to support the development of integrated services, the implementation of the Common Assessment Framework and subsequent activity to support vulnerable young people. A team of five Integrated Service Managers from across the partnership have been appointed to co-ordinate the implementation of the Common Assessment Framework. The Common Assessment Framework is being used nationally to assess the needs of vulnerable young people. This assessment then informs the development of a team around the child with a lead professional co-ordinating the provision of integrated services to ensure the child's needs are effectively met.
 - b) Partner agencies are working with the Local Authority in a number of age related and themed sub groups of the Trust to develop action plans to improve outcomes for children and young people. A wide range of priorities are being addressed, including e.g. action to reduce teenage conceptions, the development of strong anti bullying strategies across the borough, raising standards and improving outcomes for children in care, and reducing the number of young people aged 16-18 who are not engaged in education and training.
 - c) The work of the Children's Trust in Dudley was recently reviewed (June 2008) by the Audit Commission. The subsequent report was complimentary about the pragmatic and operational work of the Trust to improve the well being of children. However it also commented on the lack of formal, written, governance arrangements, and it remarked that the development of joint commissioning had lost momentum. Both of these deficiencies have recently been corrected through the adoption of a formal constitution and the establishment of a joint commissioning board and team.
- 7) The Department for Children, Schools and Families have recently published new statutory guidance on Children's Trusts. This guidance seeks to strengthen the role of the Trust and the Trust Board in the delivery of Children's Services. For example in future the Children and Young People's Plan will need annual revision, and the formal duty to co-operate with the Trust is to be extended to groups that were not previously named e.g. schools, colleges and Job Centre Plus. In Dudley we are already working on a review of our Children and Young People's Plan. The current plan covers the period 2008 – 2011 but refreshed priorities will be published later this year.

Finance

8. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Law

9. Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 requires local authorities to make arrangements to promote co-operation to improve well-being for children and places a duty on named 'relevant partners' to cooperate with those arrangements. This is the statutory underpinning of the children's trust, which is not named or defined in legislation. The essential features of a children's trust are set out in 'Statutory Guidance on Interagency Cooperation to Improve Well-being for Children' issued in 2008.

Equality Impact

10. Children and Young People are consulted and involved extensively as part of the work of the Children's Trust and the development of the Children's Plan. The aim of the Trust and the Plan is to improve outcomes and well being for all children and young people, and our work in this area is having a positive impact e.g. the Annual Performance Assessment for Children's Services in Dudley in 2008 judged that the overall contribution of services from both the Council and all other partners is good.

Recommendation

11. That this report be noted and accepted.



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List of Background Papers

Constitution of Dudley Children's Trust Board